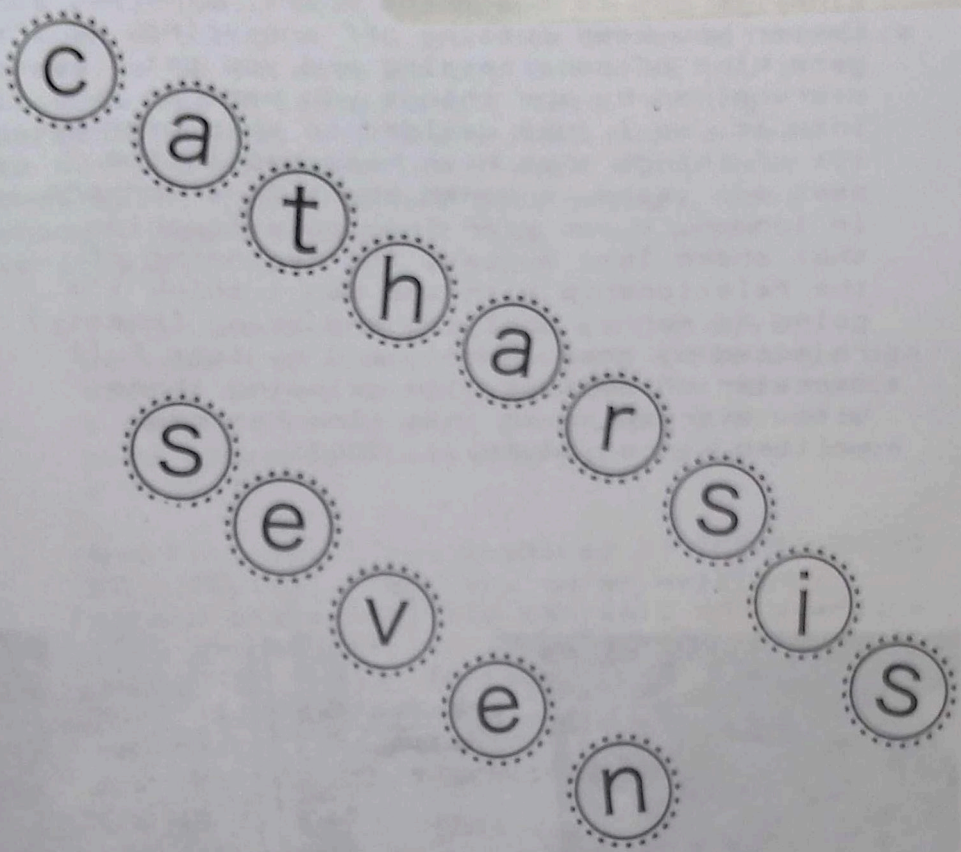
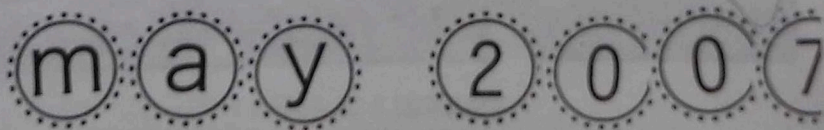
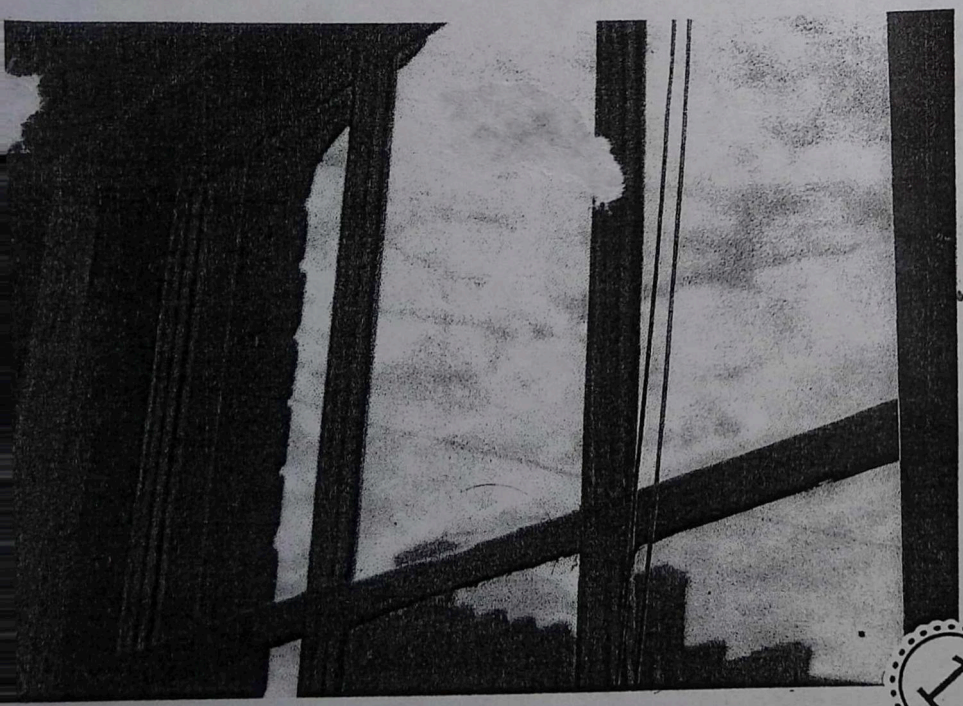

catharsis
seven


may 2007

may twenty four, two thousand and seven.

hi! my name is cat. this is catharsis seven. i haven't made a zine in a couple of years for a couple of reasons. i think part of it is that it got to be so long since the last zine. it got to the point where, like a letter you keep putting off answering, it gets kind of embarrassing and you get overwhelmed by the things you want to put into it. so i just decided to skip over a lot of things that have happened in the past two years--a month spent in a convent in london, a two year long relationship that ended last august, the beginning of the relationship with the man i think i'm going to marry, applying and being (mostly) rejected by grad school, and my last fall semester of college. i'm skipping those bits. everything in this zine has been written since january 1, 2007.



another reason that i haven't made a zine in two years is because i didn't reallyu think that my zine had a place. it's a personal zine made up mostly of pieces from my journals arranged chronologically. it's a very self-indulgent kind of a zine. it's not political, music-oriented, expository. but then i thought: the purpose of an alternative press is to be able to put out what you'd like to see written. and i love reading personal zines. why did i feel such a need to conform to the voice inside of my head that said, "this is not good enough, cool enough, scene enough" ? fuck that voice seriously!

i also wanted to put out a zine again because i graduated from vcu a few days ago with a degree in english and i'm not quite sure what to do as a grown up. i think a good concrete first thing to do is to make a zine.

and finally, i was inspired by THE RICHMOND ZINE FEST!!! thank you sarah maitland, nicole introvert, liz canfield and everyone else who worked really hard to make that happen in april. it really made me remember why i love zines. and i learned that when you return to something you used to love, you return with a greater hunger and appreciation for it.

xoxo,

cat ennis
i moved! to
[redacted]
cat.ennis@gmail.com
richmond, va 23220

1 1/2

[redacted]

january 5

here is my heart. *here is my heart.*
here, i am offering it to you. please don't hurt me.
please don't turn from me.
why am i so afraid you'll turn from me?
you sit there, in your chair, leaning over and looking at your computer. you make little sighing noises when you're concentrating like a child does.

you are precious to me.

and there's this nagging suspicion that won't leave me alone tonight. it's just that everything i try to do, nothing ever turns out right. (the decemberists)

it's gorgeous out tonight
but i just don't want this
(what is this?)

january 6

i smoked one half of one cigarette tonight. i haven't smoked in three years.

i was sitting outside of a coffeeshop at 9:30 pm on a saturday night writing this drivel:

she had a vague feeling like maybe he'd be coming home after work at midnight like he usually did. "i'll start the dinner at 11:30--african curry, maybe? no, we don't have any tomato paste. ooh, i know! i'll make barbeque seitan with cornbread." and then she moved to the kitchen to make sure she had the right ingredients, brushing a careless hand across the half used bag of corn meal he'd bought, the five pound bag of domino sugar, the honey glazed bbq sauce, the seitan in its neat rectangular container--pleased, she thought "everything in its proper place."

and then she remembered she'd be cooking for one again like every night for the past six days. "maybe i'll just have cereal. i'm not that hungry." the hands on the clock ticked towards ten fifteen. her hands were at her sides. the faucet dripped. she turned back into the bedroom--the bedroom where they had first--but no, she was not ready to think of that just yet.

everything in its proper place--except the pile of his dirty socks and white undershirts which he always kept behind the door, saying, "who cares what

then two very attractive men on mopeds came into the parking lot with beards and emo glasses. one of them came right up on the sidewalk and smiled at me. i broke off making shit up and wrote

relax they're just men. but i feel absurd sitting here now writing on a saturday night.

a beautiful half asian girl wearing tight jeans and torn canvas chucks walked past me into the coffeeshop.

she's so cool i'm not cool enough.

then

who cares if you're by yourself on saturday night. go home. i don't like it here. it's like putting my absurd loneliness on display. i'm going to go buy a pack of cigarettes.

and i did. the man behind the counter at 7-eleven asked to see my Id. he pursed his lips and peered over the top of it at me. "1985...hmm." i asked for camel lights. he gave me menthol lights. i said, "oh no, just regular." he gave me regular menthol. i said, "no, regular lights." it was very confusing. and i forgot i needed a lighter so i had to ring up a separate transaction but then finally i was out the door with a pack of cigarettes, beating them against the butt of my palm like i used to do when i was seventeen. my fingers were trembling. i don't know why. i sat down across the street on the curb to light it. the first inhalation was beautiful. do you know how smells can really bring you back? imagine the smell and the taste of your teenage years just overwhelming you...

the taste is still in the back of my throat now an hour later. but i started to feel dizzy and sick after a few puffs, so i put it out

halfway and gave the rest of the pack to a boy who works at the coffeeshop. he said he'd give me a free drink next time i come in, i laughed and waved goodbye like it was no big deal but i was so happy to just be *fucking talking to somebody*.

i feel very sad sometimes and i'm not exactly sure why.

justin's staying at his new apartment tonight. we've been (say it) living together for the past two months. premarital cohabitation. oohh, i'm a bad girl. at least my dad says so.

but i'm tired of being good.

i press the write command and go

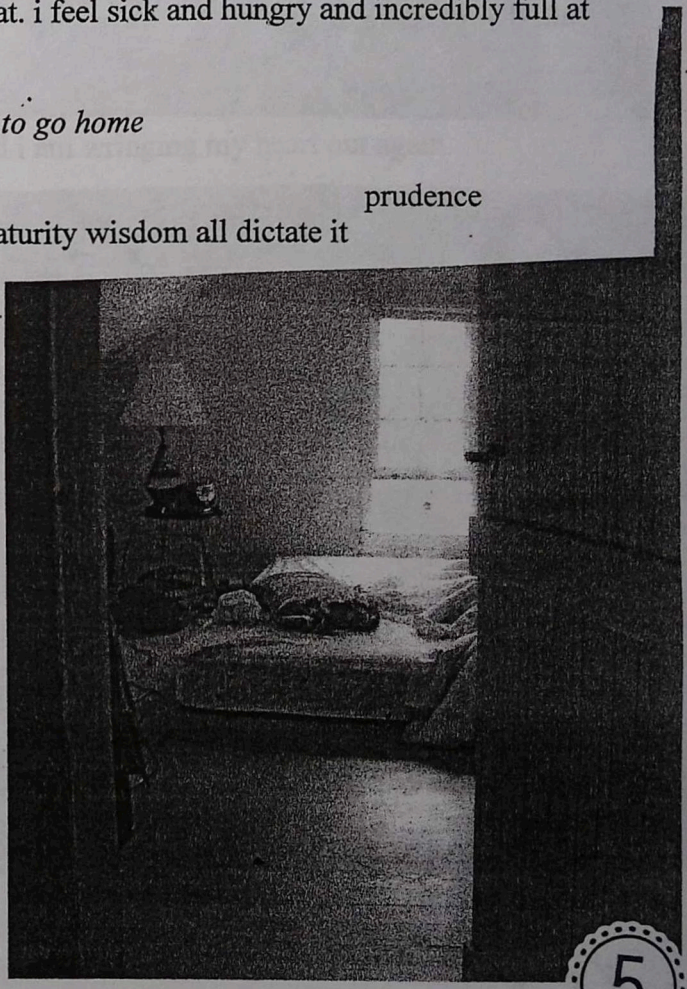
but it's not that easy. i haven't written anything in a long time.

baby, don't go. you could go back to your lonely apartment and leave me here. your bed isn't even made. you don't have sheets on it. but you're a big boy you can handle it. colonial and idlewood, just go. but please don't go. i know you need to. i know we need to soon. we can't live together forever. we need our separate places.

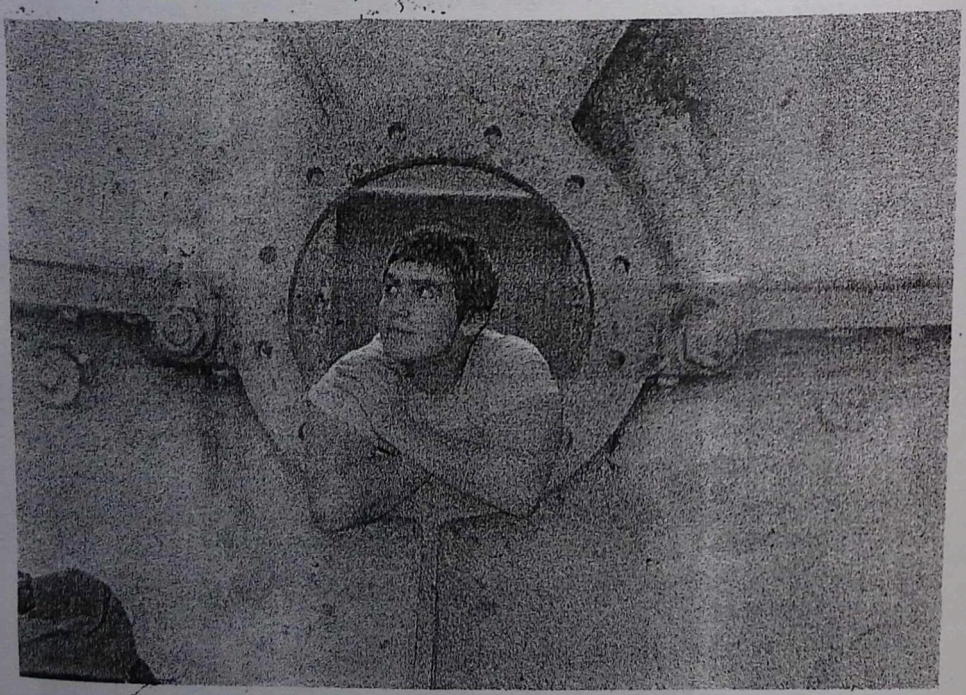
i am drawing the story of how hard we tried.(ani difranco) it's not as easy as that. i feel sick and hungry and incredibly full at the same time.

i know you need to go home

prudence
responsibility maturity wisdom all dictate it



but i started this thing repeating over and over to myself blake's maxim, "the road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom" like it was some sort of prayer. and so i went up to fredericksburg every night i could and i spent two nights with you in a row up there and i didn't really do my homework and i spent all weekend every weekend with you and completely fucked myself during the week, having to stay up until three in the morning every morning you weren't here just to get my shit done. but i still got all As and you're still here so i guess all in all, it worked out okay.



ah god i am wringing my heart out again

i've been so down lately. like there is a universe between me and other people. like every time we make love i feel a little warmth for a little while but as soon as he pulls out it's gone.

just write it out. the light from this computer screen is much too bright.

i feel like i'm in my car again with a cup of reheated wawa coffee from the night before. i have to take a shit and it's raining hard. i'm driving back from fredericksburg.

i used to be younger

i'm not getting any hotter
you can't get a better job get a better job fuck a hotter girl. i'm static at best

sorry

OH JESUS I M ONLY GOING TO LIVE ONCE. I'M ONLY GOING TO BE 21 ONCE I'M ONLY GOING TO BE THIS YOUNG UNMARRIED ALMOST MARRIED ONCE

gracious sweet god *enjoy the fuck out of this excitement*

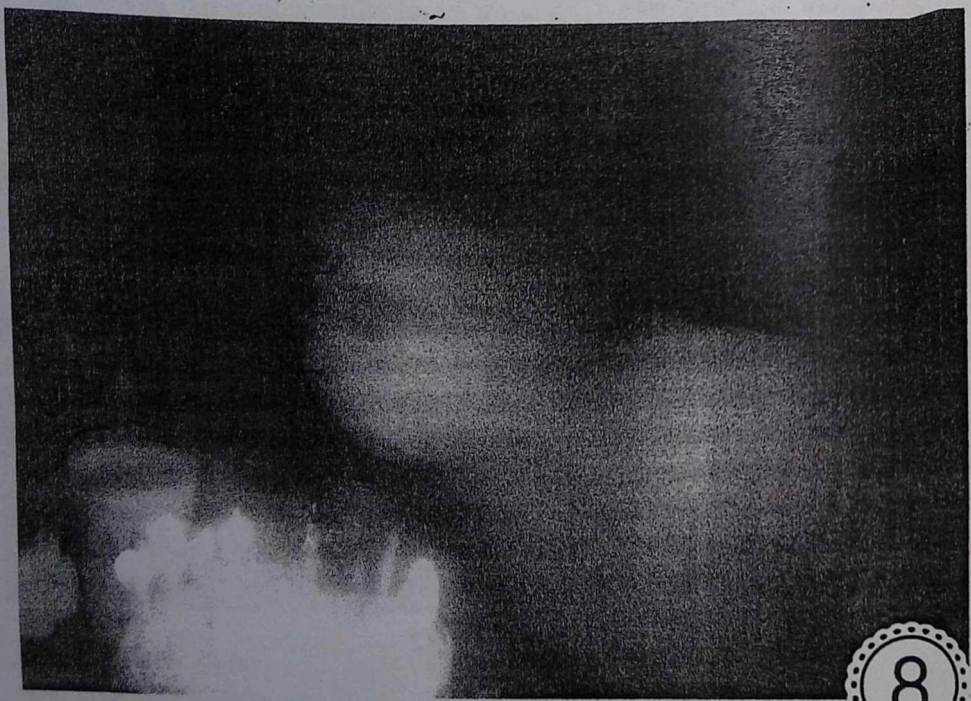
SUCK THE MARROW OUT OF THE BONE

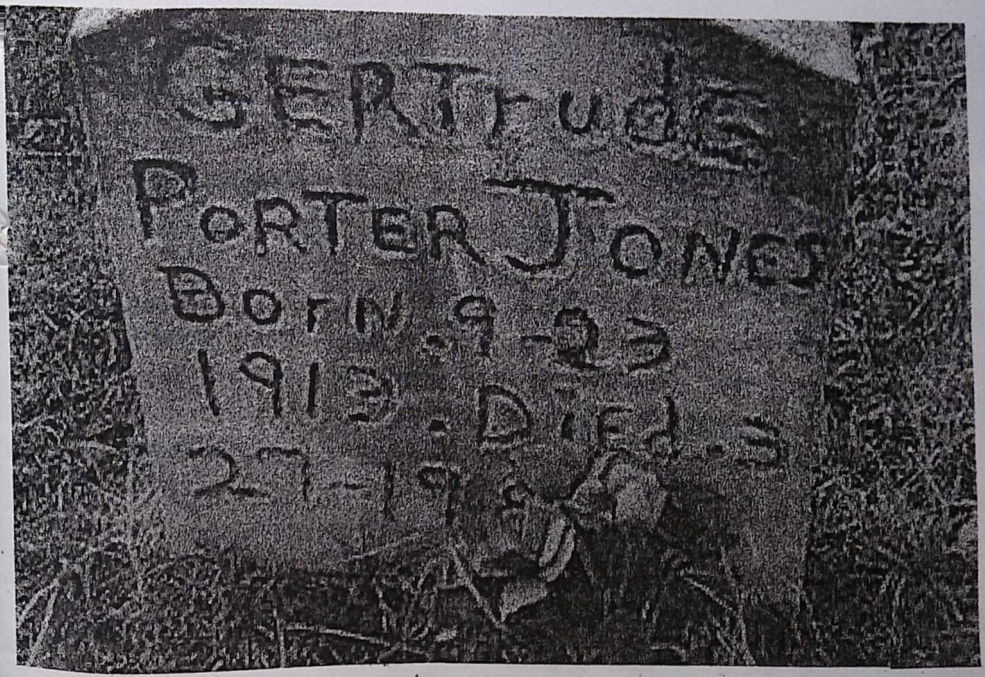
or be vegan about it and don't.

i miss you when you're not here. i miss you when i'm alone in my bed without you. i get carried away about you. and i like it.

This is kind of magical right now. The fan is on. Cats are running back and forth across my body. The man-boy I love is sitting beside me. Strange French music is playing. It's dark. I really like this moment here.

I'm happier now than I was when I first started writing.





lauren and i went to the veteran's cemetery off of route 360 in amelia. there are hundreds of graves there, lined up in neat orderly rows like soldiers, all with perfect white tombstones--a phalanx of tombs. they're organized by date of death. men who served in world war two are laying next to strangers born twenty years later who served in vietnam. and yet they're sleeping peacefully.

imagine those soldiers alive in a bar. two hundred soldiers from different time periods. they wouldn't be in orderly rows. they'd be jutting out at strange angles to one another, moving, talking, shifting, changing, shouting, smoking.

maybe because we're afraid of death--but we have to make it orderly to get it under control. death is everything life is not, right? life is transient, changing, chaotic, uncontrollable, loud. death is eternal, unchanging, orderly, contained, quiet.

but isn't it more logical that same would follow same? why would death have to be life's opposite? maybe death is just as loud, just as chaotic and confusing as life. and just as transient.

lauren almost sunk into some guy's grave who'd been buried just three days ago. it was pretty scary. her foot went down at least a foot.

is this the point of life:
'i go to college to get a better job. and i work hard to get a better job. and i get a better job to fuck a hotter girl."

i think i'm a wide eyed idealist, but don't some people go to college because they love learning? and they want to enjoy their jobs, not just to make more money? god, i hope so.

january 8

on the sill still

no, i don't know how to hold you without shaking. no, i'm not aware of how i could possibly love you without aching. yes, i give you everything. ((tegan and sara))

i feel so far away from him right now even though he's laying right next to me in bed asleep. his body is warm. he's wearing blue boxers with diamonds on them and a gray undershirt. he smells like old spice and soap. my dinosaur blanket is pulled up to his chin and he twitches every few minutes as he sleeps, like maybe he's riding a bike in his dream. he's lying on his side with his knees bent. my butt fits perfectly into the warm space of his lap. i could curl up to him if i wanted to.

but instead, i'm sitting against the wall with headphones on in the dark. the sound of the rain is steady and sad.
i feel very far away
there is a dull panic starting in the back of my head
i don't know why
i'm almost twenty two
will i feel this way forever

my moods change with the shifting wind

he

doesn't think i have any issues

my god it's 104 am
i have to work early

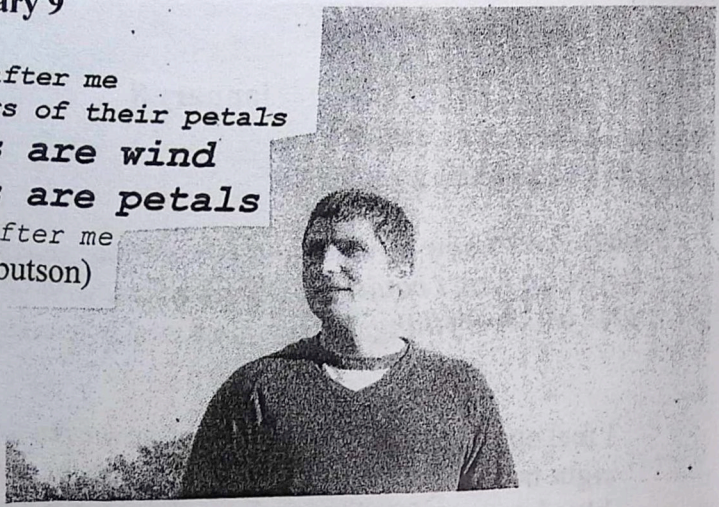
there's a condom on the windowsill still in its packaging

and the sound of the rain is so steady

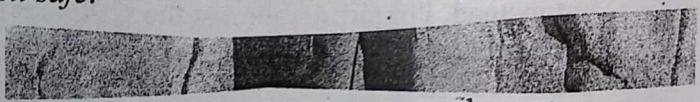
and so sad

january 9

repeat after me
wind strips flowers of their petals
my fingers are wind
your clothes are petals
repeat after me
(denver butson)



there's an aching inside of me tonight. *(always.)* yesterday my hands trembled at the sight of you. yesterday my hands trembled as i blew out smoke thinking of you. yesterday i called you at midnight and came over to your apartment on idlewood and slept on your mattress beneath the closed window on the second floor suspended above an alley and *yesterday i felt safe.*



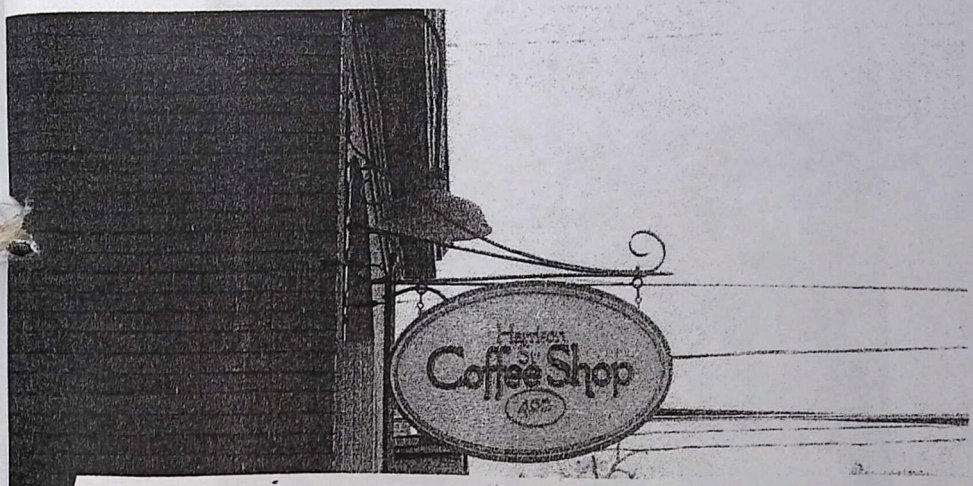
you can make me feel safe like no one else can. there's something so sweet about the turn of your sideburns or the way you look up at me while you're making dinner or your bare feet in the bathroom and i know they're cold against the tile.

i'll follow you into the dark (death cab for cutie). you told me you'd follow me as far as you could. you said maybe you were waiting to marry me because you are a coward. why wait till school is finished? why do we have to have our master's first? i didn't know what to say but, "but..."

but it's not all sweet and i'm glad it's not. otherwise i'd be worried.

look, this is my life. here, in my outstretched palm.

(take it, it's yours. (morrisey)).



january 21

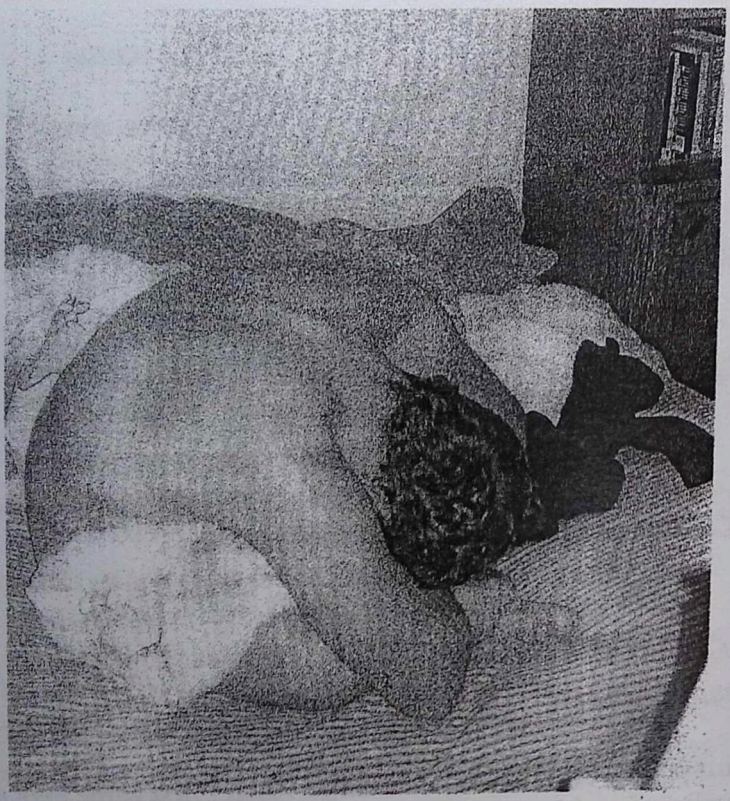
the violin is the closest in pitch and tone to the sound of a human crying.

this city, which seemed so large when i first came here, has well defined boundaries that i've pushed up against time and time again. i will shed this city like a snake shedding its skin. i will move on. and i will always remember richmond as the city of my youth... the bohemian rowhouses, the three apartments i've had here, one in a brick building on grove avenue with trees outside the window, one too large and suspended above a coffee shop, and one in the downstairs of a white house on south vine street--i will always remember these places as the places where i was young and learned that i was young.

but i will move on

i need to move on

i wake up and he's looking at me. he rolls over and turns on the c.d. player. james brown sings, "get up, get on up and shake your moneymaker." i hope he moves on with me.



january 23

it felt like we were at crosspurposes. like i was shooting bb's at an acorn he was holding up, like nothing penetrated. we were making catty comments to each other, sarcasm and biting wit, and i was afraid to cross the room to sit down by him. i stood with my arms folded by the television, "Are we having a fight?" "No. But a disagreement."

i don't even know what about. that i don't like the tone in his voice--that sometimes his tongue cuts me and sort of scares me?

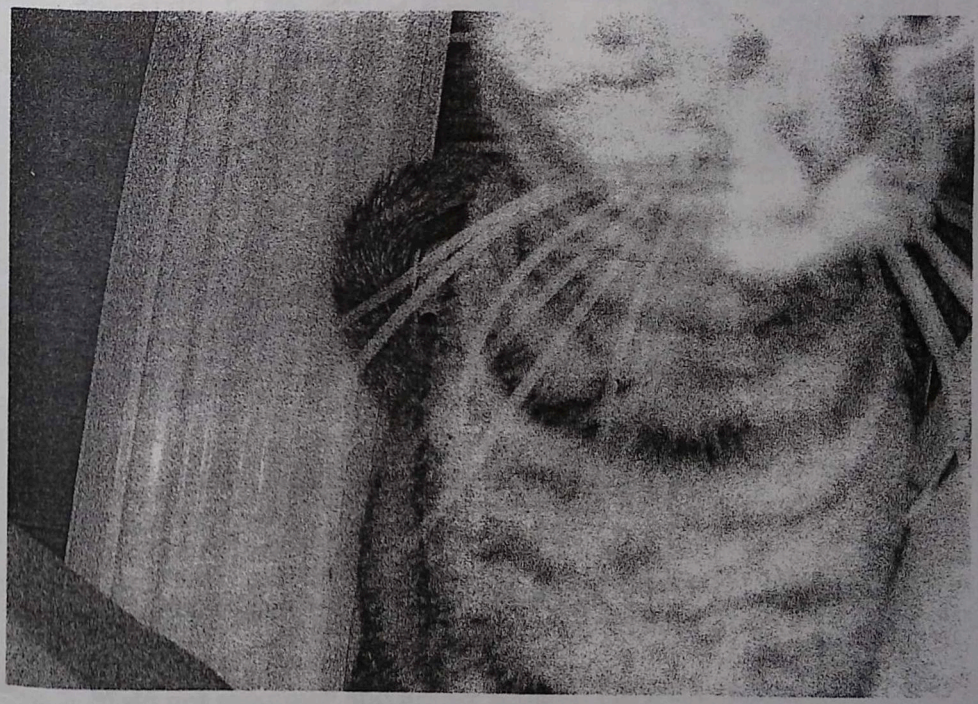
"you have a very american point of view," he tells me. "I'm not sure if that's an insult." "It is."
oh, put me in a box please. just write off my objections? i love it when you do that.

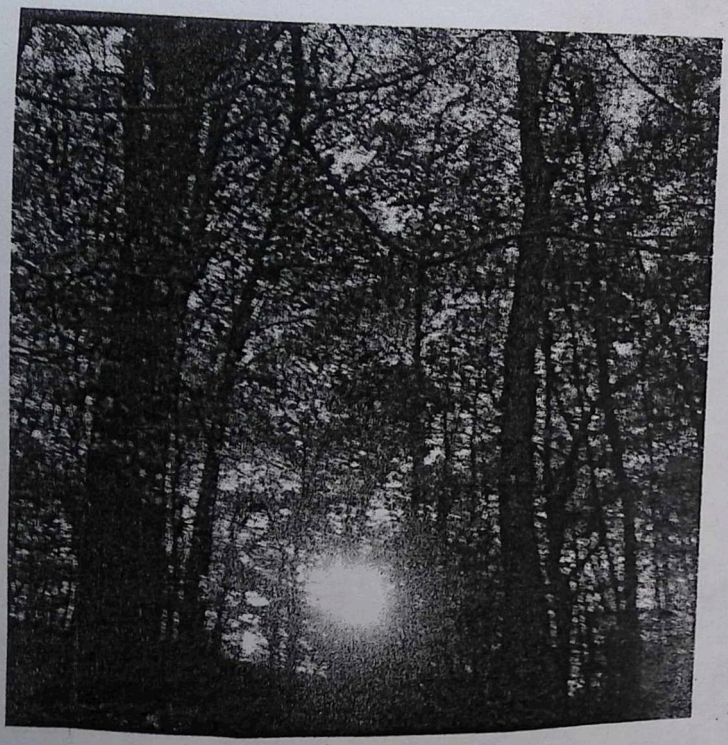
i'm hungry and it's almost seven. i should go home.

january 25

do you remember when i came to visit you at your work after i broke up with you and that old man asked you why you let me go and you laughed self consciously because it was the other way around?

yeah, i thought that was pretty awkward too.





january 29

i am so inspired but it's just a vague feeling in the back of my head, an empty anxiety that i have to write, brought on by listening to a violin rendition of *sunday, bloody sunday* by u2.

i feel so young and so old at the same time. 22 years old almost.

(today you fucked me so hard it felt like i was nothing and everything at the same time.)

february 1

my mom became a citizen of the united states early this year. i talked to her on the phone afterwards and this is the gist of what she said.

"Let me read you the oath of allegiance. It is *not* the pledge of allegiance. It is much worse than that."

I hereby declare, an oath, that *I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state or sovereignty,* of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that *I will bear arms* on behalf of the United States when required by the law*; that I will perform noncombatant service in the armed forces of the United States when required by the law*; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by law; and that *I take this obligation freely* without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion: *So help me God.*

"I do not renounce and abjure Ireland. I'm *Irish.* When we were saying the oath--there were only nine of us there, and one woman was crying. There was a man leading us and we only said the oath one half sentence at a time. The man said that he was going to be watching our lips to see if they were moving. And not only are they moving, but are those exact words coming out of our mouths? And I thought, 'God bless Democracy.'"

february 9

i've listened to "fast car" by tracy chapman six times in a row now. it's giving me a fine feeling in the pit of my stomach, kind of an inspired feeling--or is that the smirnoff? either way, i have "a feeling that i belong. that i could be someone."

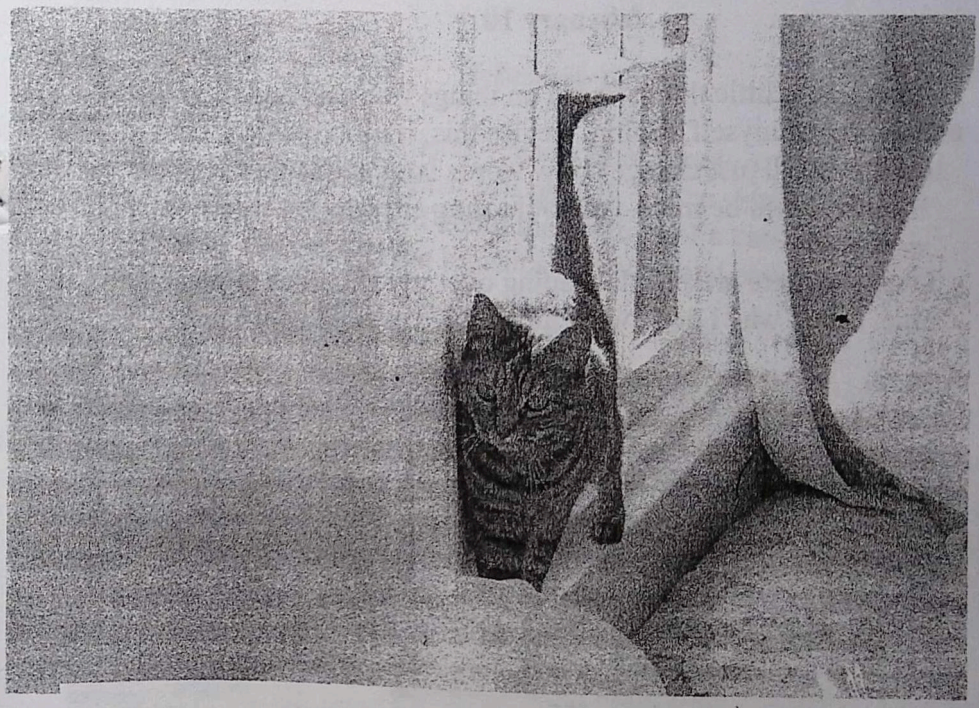
it's february ninth. the years just keep revolving around. i keep getting older. i'm like your bike that's sitting in my living room that you keep repairing. over the past ten years, you've changed everything on your bike including the frame. is it the same bike? i keep changing little parts of myself that break down, making repairs, trading pieces in for other pieces. am i the same person as i was five years ago?

yes, if you believe that i have some unchanging soul. but i'm a devout agnostic and i'm not really devout about anything.

seventh time in a row for "fast car."

maybe together we could get somewhere

we'll be together for a while. at least, that's what i think right now. you said the first time we met, "i've got big plans for you, kid." i felt like i was in some 1940s movie and you were humphrey bogart and everything would be alright and this was the beginning of a beautiful friendship. and it was.



february 10

my cat spilled my fruity pebbles all over the floor this morning and i got irrationally mad at him and locked him up in the bathroom for a few minutes. but he's just a black cat that likes to play with q-tips and whose long lanky legs knock over bowls of fruity pebbles sometimes. he's just a cat. i'm not proud of locking him in the bathroom.

february 10

i write these little things based on things i've read and then make notes to myself, saying, "revise this, it's too plagiaristic." like maybe i'll just change a few words later and suddenly it will be mine. i'm not fooling anyone.

i feel like there are people reading over my shoulder all the time. is that why i don't write anymore? i'm tired of writing

about writing, of metacognition, of self-conscious stumbling around, thinking about myself all the time and about what i look like. yes, there's a girl in the mirror, and yes, she's twenty two and almost has a college degree and has these little lines on her forehead that she thinks are maybe just squint marks? or maybe they're wrinkles. well, she's there, and you'll have to deal with her, cat. call a shit a shit. sticking feathers up your ass doesn't make you a chicken.

i'm also tired of talking about myself in the second and the third person. pretending like i'm the omnscient narrator of my own life gives me some level of control, some comforting distance. but it's not really working anymore. it's not comforting anymore.

it just makes me feel like maybe i'm schizophrenic. the symptoms start showing up when you're in your early twenties, didn'tcha know.

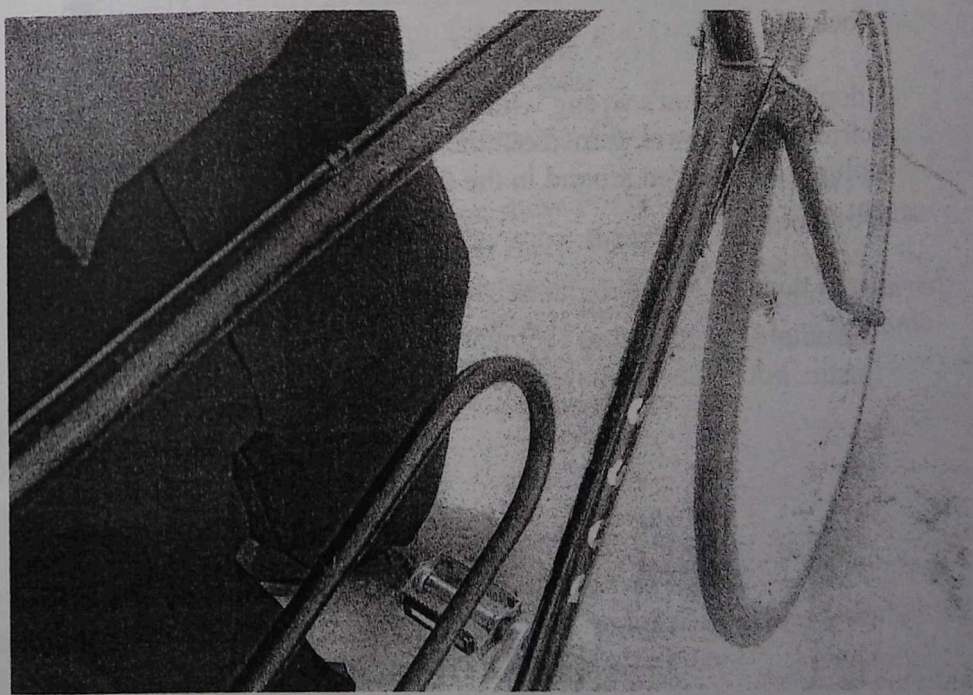
february 11

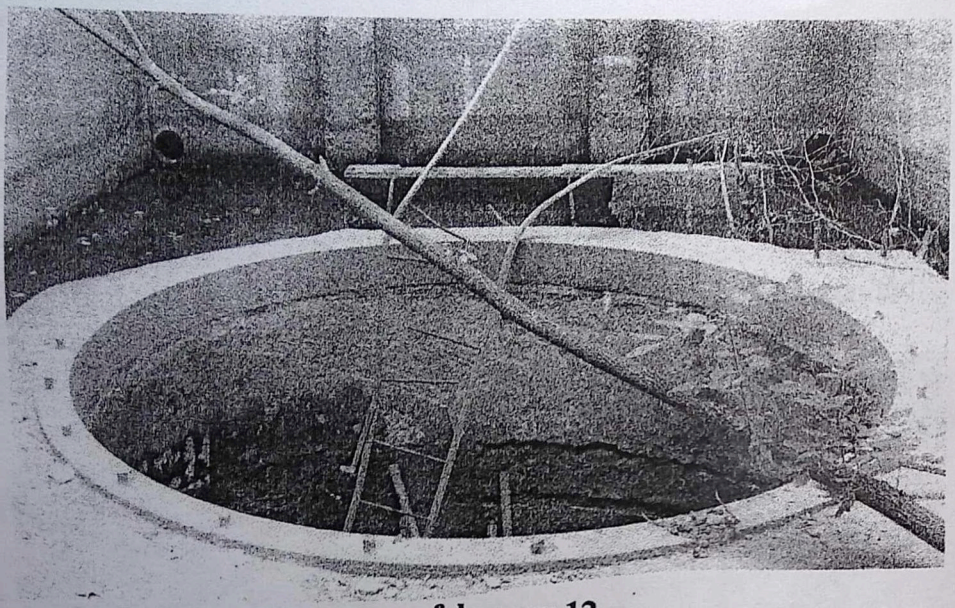
i used to be very idealistic. i made zines, i rode my bike everywhere, i was against cell phones, tv, the excessive use of computers. i fantasized about the creation of a car-free section of town, i discussed the logistics seriously and passionately.

but now i just make fun of everything.

resolutions one and two

i'm going to ride my bike across country when i graduate.
i'm going to only use my car when i absolutely have to.





february 12

i was going to do homework tonight but i thought i would just try to write out this aching feeling instead. it didn't really work because i haven't written enough. it's eleven eleven, i kissed the clock and wished that i would start to feel better.

i don't know what's wrong with me tonight. i covered up my mirror with a towel, turned out the light, put cursive on full volume and danced around in the dark like i'm crazy saying, "i am a person."

justin thinks that i've romanticized biking cross country and i definitely have because i romanticize everything, including justin. but he doesn't have a problem with that.

february 25

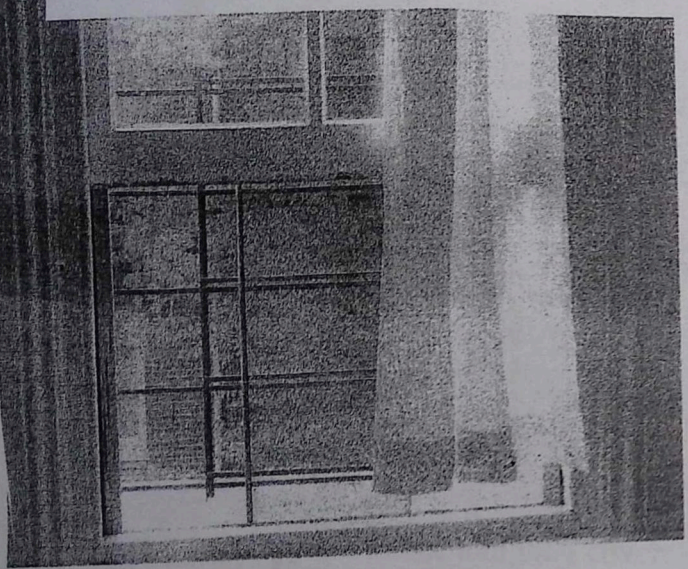
last night, i went to the first show i've been to in almost two years, i think. i drank a beer there. the music made me want to start playing music again, especially lizakate, who is this awesome folk-guitarist. i came home and this morning i played all those songs i used to play and i coughed, and spat up some phlegm and sang.

march 6

i meant to call my father

oh, something shudders when you touch me there. it feels like his touch. he did touch me there. could it have been a year ago? six months? was it yesterday?

who was he? i should say, "they." they made me feel dirty, impure, slutty, wild, reckless, insincere, and beautiful.

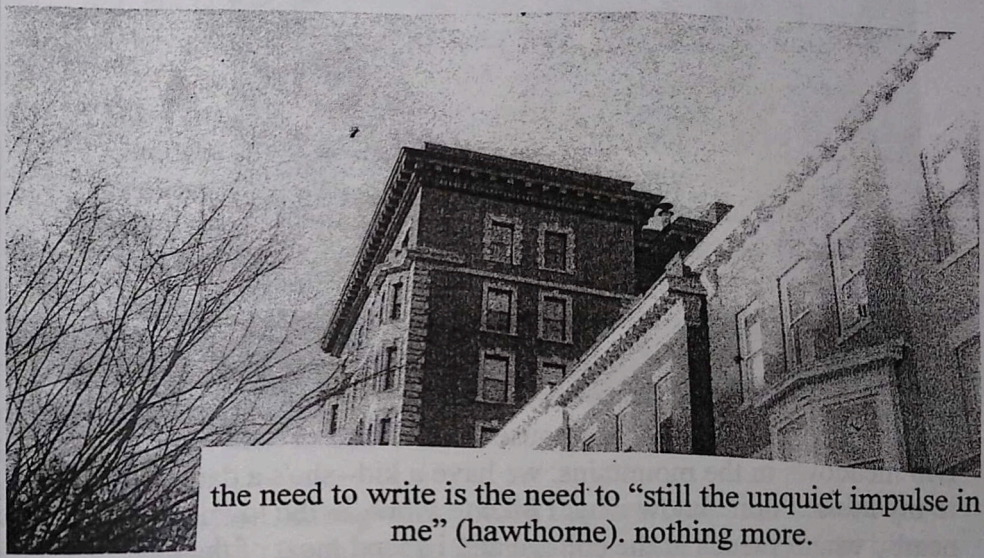


<u>case study:</u>

he was a virgin when i met him and when i left him, he wasn't. simple as that. point a to point b, point a inside of circle b. there was nothing more. there was the heavy silence of the summer night against the window, the weight i could feel pushing up against the screen. there were the white sheets and the twin sized bed and the picture of my father framed on the dresser. there was the sound of the ceiling fan whirring in the dark, and somewhere outside, someone was playing a guitar. and he was a virgin when i met him and when i left him, he wasn't. there was nothing more.

march 6

i think i can summon up some of the old ghosts. when i was nineteen, they felt substantial. like i had some fire i could tame that was dancing inside of my self, something wild and tangled that could be tamed and untangled and taught to make pages upon pages of fiction. but here are the old ghosts for you, here in the palm of my hand, just three wet matches.



the need to write is the need to "still the unquiet impulse in me" (hawthorne). nothing more.

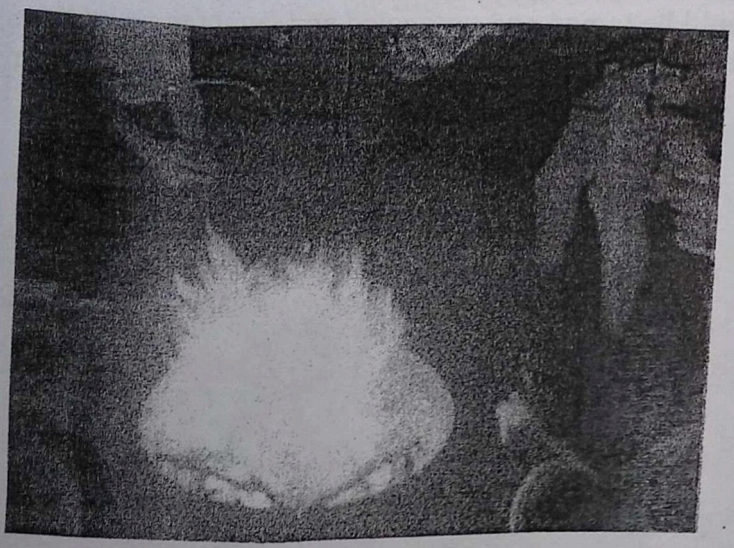
don't you hate writing about writing? doesn't it feel like masturbation?

i'm not going to johns hopkins.
i'm not going to baltimore.
i'm staying in richmond for at least one more year.
and he said he'd follow me when i go.
i dreamed he gave me a thin gold ring and i wore it on my index finger.
and i ate dinner with his friends, and they were all looking at me.
and i felt beautiful and i twirled the ring around on my index finger
and no one told me it was on the wrong finger, because i didn't want to know
and it was a dream, so i didn't have to know

march 8

i am twenty two. you are twenty three.

we talk on the riverbank about our ideal days ten years from now.



i say, wake up in a white farmhouse sandwiched in between two meadows in the mountains. we have a kid--she's a daughter in my mind. i don't know why. i bike to work, in the town nearby where i teach at the college and i spend most of the day there. i come home and talk to my agent about my first novel which is about to be published. i work on my second novel for a few hours. someone else takes care of the kid, i'm not sure who? and then i come home and we make dinner together and then we have sex and go to sleep. i throw in a hike there too, somewhere. and some splashing around in the water in the river.

you say we wake up in a log cabin somewhere in the mountains--ashe county, north carolina, maybe. we have an upstairs lofty room to ourselves, small, we don't have our own bathroom, we basically live on ceiling beams. the kids are downstairs. we have definitely a four year old, but not sure about the other one. it's a saturday, so we have it off. you're a middle management government executive--you say maybe

recycling or waste management disposal? but that doesn't matter because it's saturday. and we go to a place where we hike, maybe backbone rock, and the kid(s) play in the water by themselves while we rock climb. then the kid is tired, we're not, but he is, so we leave and go home and make dinner. then we have really loud sex that will scar the kid for life.

i know that these aren't exactly practical. for example, how am i supposed to live in a farmhouse in the mountains but still live close enough to a city where i can bike to and teach class? i'll have to drive. and who takes care of the kid while i work? and also we couldn't rock climb while the four year old swam by himself.

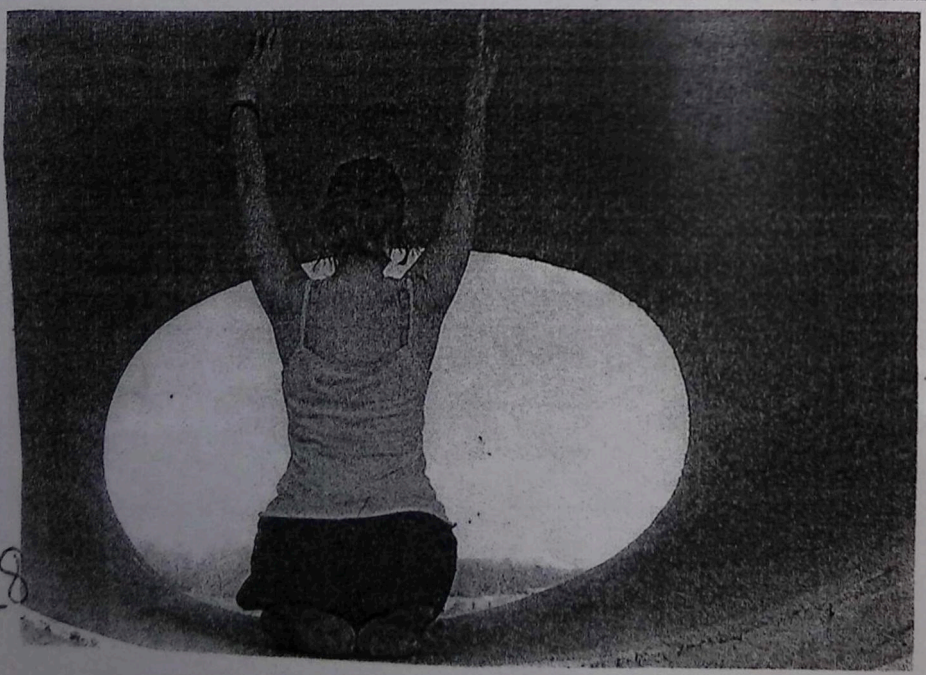
which just means that we're too young to have kids yet cause we really don't know how much of a commitment he would be.

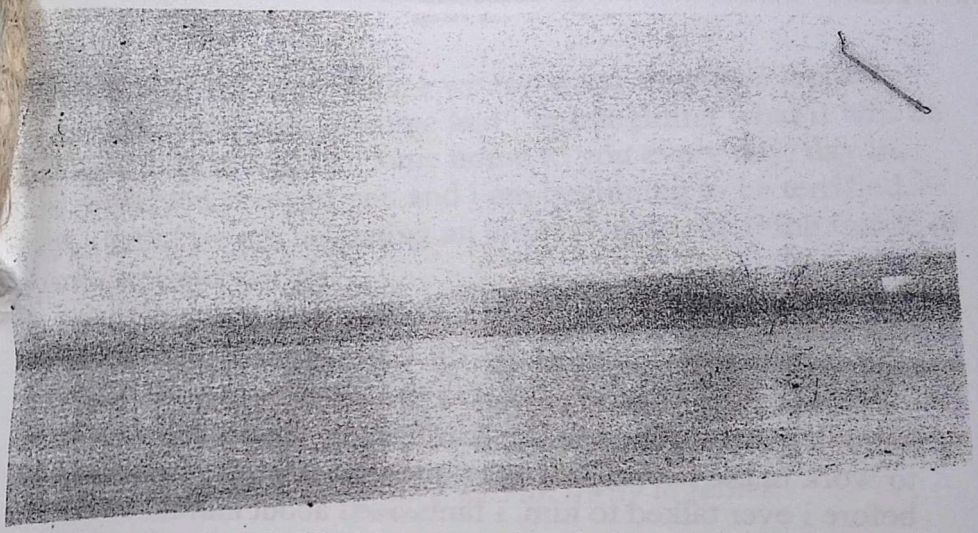
but right now, sitting with you on the riverbank, in the cold of early march, watching the fire that you made for me, i feel like this is my ideal. dreaming with you is my ideal day.

march 11

my parents met somewhere in ireland and my mom says it was the first time but my dad says he had known her and had watched her for a while. my mom was engaged to someone else for the last four years, but she left him and four months later, she was twenty years old, and married, and an immigrant in washington d.c., where she tasted grape soda for the first time and was afraid of getting her stilettos stuck in the grates on the sidewalk. on her way to work every morning, a man would ask her if she wanted to work in his nightclub, "we've got real fancy, real exotic dancers," but she swung her long black hair and said no every time.

the first time i got my period i was waking up and i went to the bathroom and there was just a little bit of blood in my panties. i was late for school, so i grabbed one of my sister's pads from underneath the sink, unwrapped it, and stuck it into my panties, proud of myself for being so efficient, and i was grateful that they showed us how to do that in family life because my mother hadn't showed me how to yet. the first time i wore a tampon, i only pushed it in halfway and it hurt like hell but i thought it was supposed to feel that way and i was ashamed to ask anyone and i didn't know you could pee and wear a tampon





at the same time so i held my pee for six hours.

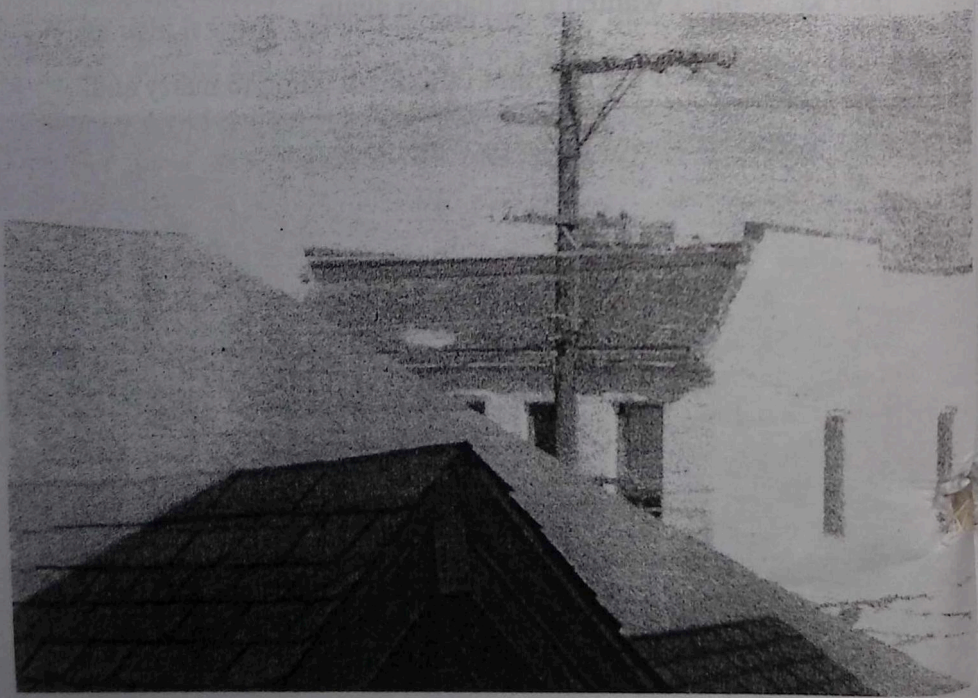
the first time i came, i was nineteen and on the linoleeum floor of my dorm room, and my boyfriend was doing something with his tongue and i thought i was about to pee, but i felt it building up inside of me, from my toes all the way up my legs and rushing over my groin and up and out to the tips of my fingers and then it released and i didn't even know what had happened, but i knew that i wanted it to happen again.

so now i've found the boy that i think i'm going to marry and i'm only twenty two and he's only twenty three but i look up to him somehow. his blue eyes are all i need, and at night in our bed he does wonderful things with his hands and he can make me come every time.

so this was going to be about god, but i can't find god anywhere, no matter where i look, there's just faces and places, things and more things, and meaning that comes from material, which is meaningful nonetheless.

i shook martin's hand in the coffee shop. it was warm. he used to work in the library. i wrote a piece of a screenplay about him before i ever talked to him. i fantasized about him for a few months last year during the bleak time when it wasn't uncommon for me to fantasize about total strangers.

and today i finally met him while he was putting half and half in his coffee and it was anti-climatic



please propose to me before we run away together. we're looking at apartments online and i'm imagining what it will be like in three months to come home to you every day, day in, day out, you you you you and i am beginning to be terrified. you said, "we are becoming an entity," and something inside of me started to scream!
i wait for you to come home. i wait for you to leave. *i wait for you*. day in, day out. i hear the door open, the door slam, and you're there suddenly, flooding the bedroom with light (not "my bedroom" anymore and not quite "our bedroom" yet)

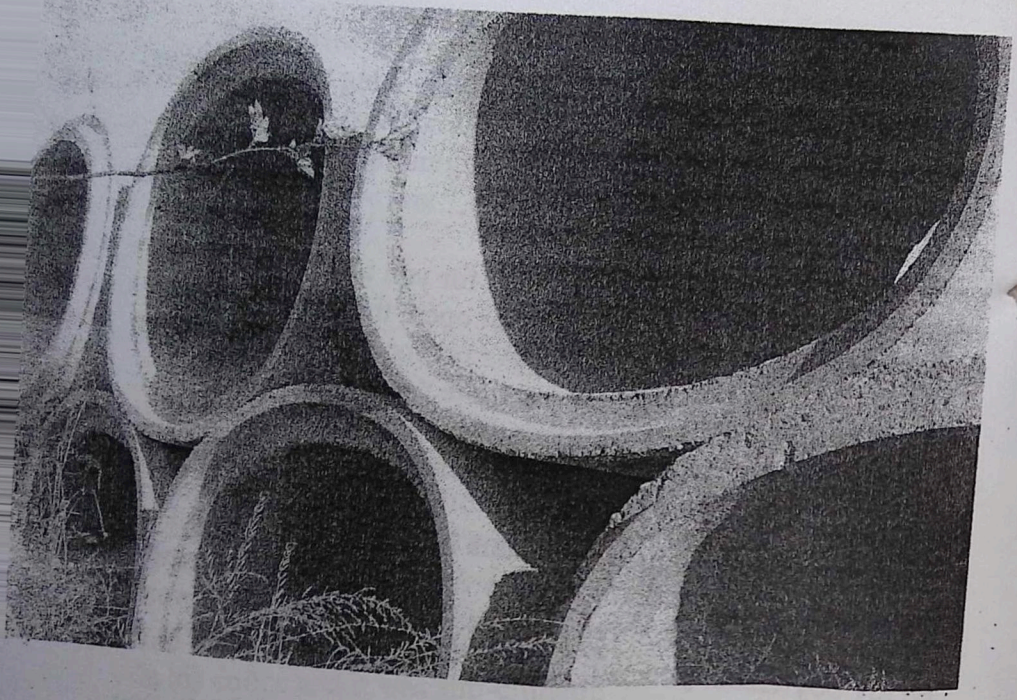
please propose to me before we run away together

for some reason, running away this way would be okay if i could introduce you using a fancy french work with an extra –e on the end of it, with three syllables instead of two. you won't be my boyfriend. you will be, "this is justin, my fiancee."

marriage is more than a piece of paper to me, but i didn't want to tell you that because i know it's old fashioned to think that being your wife will be different than being your *live in girlfriend*—but i want to be your wife before we make ourselves an entity.

there is a dull panic, A DULL PANIC growing sharper, growing sharper, rising up from my very center when i remember the way you said, "entity..."

<u>entity: a self-contained piece of data that can be referenced as a unit.</u>



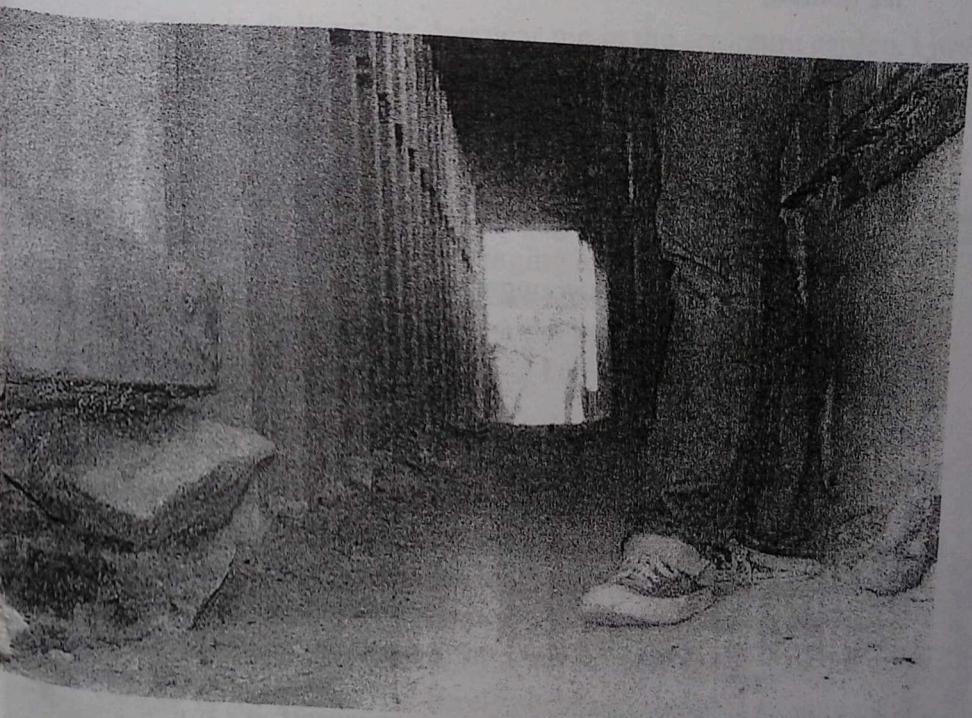
I'm so cold. It's so cold in here. But it feels good in my gut. My nipples are getting harder. There are goosebumps on my arms. I will be famous some day. I don't know what for. There is so much to be famous for and so little significance in being famous. I wish that I could translate the speed that I am typing this into the computer. I wish the computer could remember the abuses it endures while I am typing on it. I wish the computer would record this sound of crazy tapping, hard, hard, hard tapping. I am kicking the shit out of this keyboard, but it will forgive and forget. I have to change the FONT for emphasis, I can't just bear down harder, like you can with a pEN. I can hear the springs bouncing up and down in the keyboard. I am hitting it so hard. I don't know why. '''

Oh my God I am fucking horny.

march 12

shh, here is a secret:

(i have these cuts on my wrist from where you tied your belt around my hands and the buckle bit into my skin. i press my fingers into the cuts and savor the pain like running my tongue over a toothache. the pain makes the memory of you inside of me so immediate, so real.



march 18

i grind my teeth at night. he says it sounds like nails on a chalkboard. and i'm glad that someone knows what i do while i'm sleeping because it means that someone is there.

this is my life. this is lonely. this is lovely.

it's nothing like what i expected. i am twenty two.

i thought i'd be having more fun. but i am okay.

i don't like drinking, really. and i'm really the same as i was when i was younger. i don't think i'll ever change.

and that's okay.

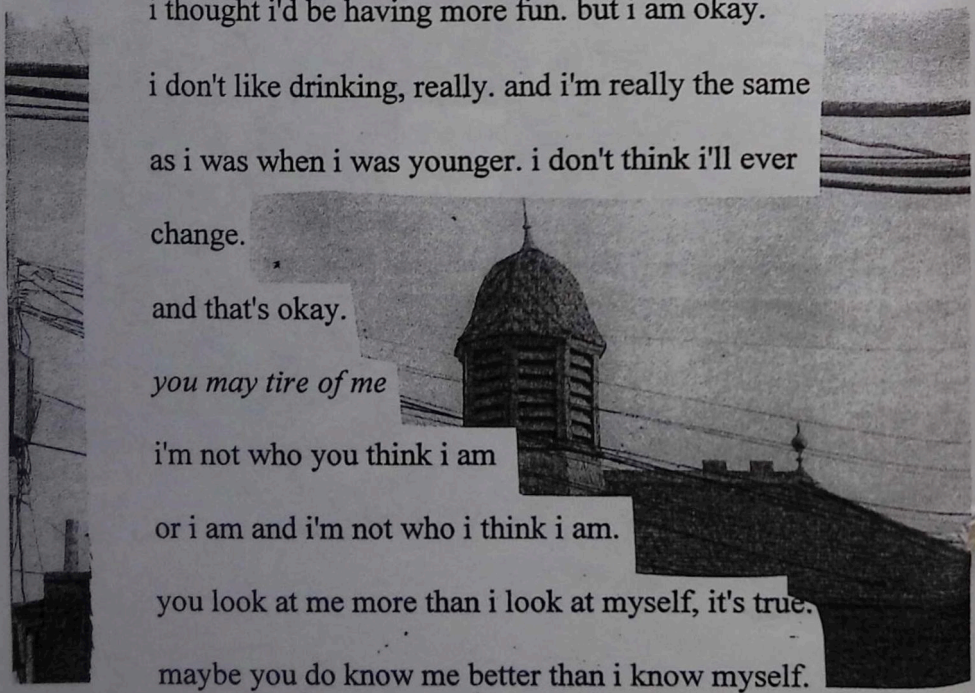
you may tire of me

i'm not who you think i am

or i am and i'm not who i think i am.

you look at me more than i look at myself, it's true.

maybe you do know me better than i know myself.



march 22

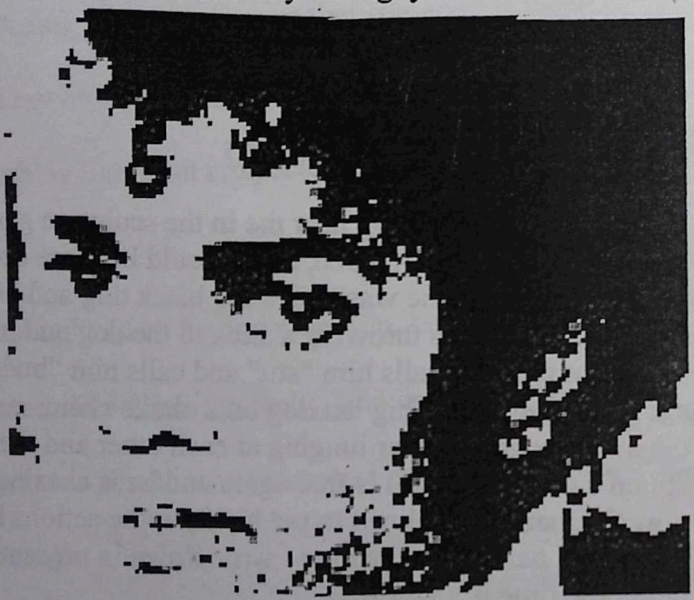
sometimes i wish i was invisible. i just checked out my own bike. it's a sexy bike. i think i am an asshole sometimes because i drop little clues that i'm smarter than i really am— and i don't know how i'm going to make friends in baltimore

april 1

a man is walking his dog near me in the sculpture garden. i just kind of want to be left alone, but i should be more open to people and things. he was a nice big black dog and he licked my face. the man is throwing a stick to the dog and his name is stuart but the man calls him "stu" and calls him "buddy." now stu is playing with a big tan dog on a choke chain. now the dogs are separated after lunging at each other and the man put stu on a chain. now stu is free again and he is chasing a stick. now the man bends down to pet his face. the actions happen too fast to narrate, everything i write down in present tense is a lie by the time it's written.

a woman named janet came by to take picture of a tree that she's fallen in love with. she says, "it should be treasured. its width in the middle of the city is beautiful." i hadn't even noticed the tree, but it is truly beautiful, so wide, its branches easily the width of another tree's trunk, ivy climbs up its side, it hangs over the row houses, its leaves just beginning to come out, its blossoms just barely showing, spring is surging up inside of it, spring in its sticky warm sweetness is rising up within its wide trunk and i think spring is rising up inside of me too. janet took a picture of the tree and now we have both captured it in our own way.

the first words you said to me were, "looking for shelter?" i swear to god, i'm not even kidding. those were the first words you said to me. we were at a party at my neighbor's house and people were throwing beer bottles down from the balcony, so i went to sit down closer to the house next to a group of guys i didn't know, and you were one of those guys. you said, "looking for shelter?" you were sitting cross legged with a camoflauge hat on and you looked like a little boy. your eyes were so blue and so intense. i did sum you up right then and there--you were a little straightedge hardcore vegan boy who liked bikes. i was totally wrong. you are not a little boy.



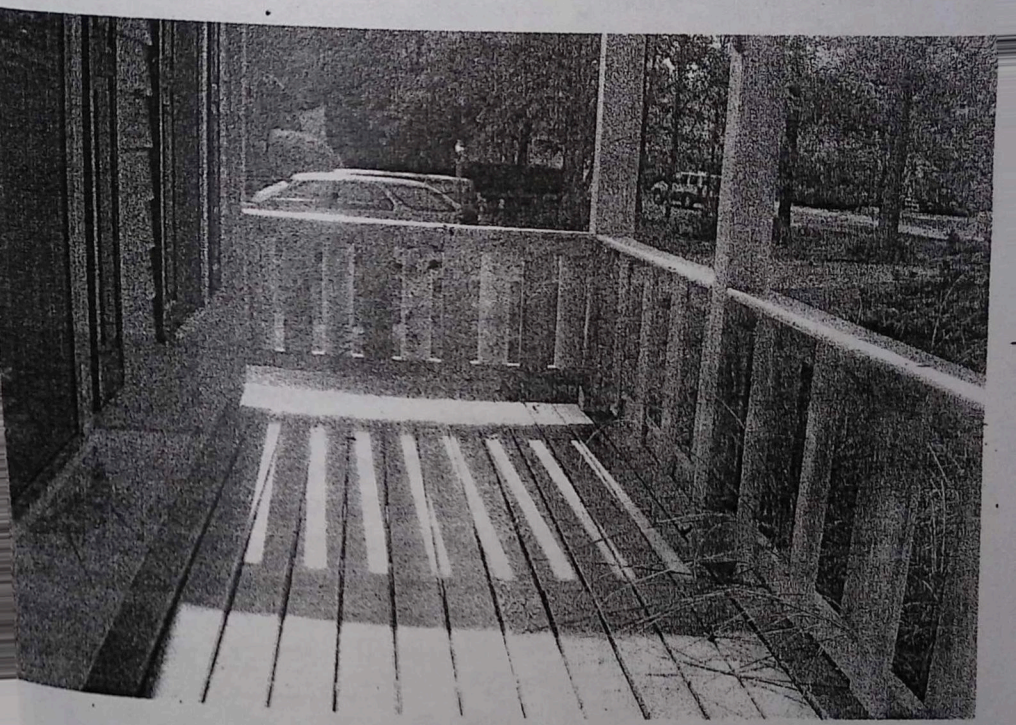
you are a man.

this morning i kissed your thick thumb. it smelled like latex and there is an angry blister on the inside of it. you wrapped your arm wrapped around my stomach, and i felt safe, encircled in your strong arms. (don't laugh at me, i am a woman and you are a man, and there is something beautiful in recognizing that.)

"looking for shelter?" you said the first time i met you. and something deeply ingrained, something genetic, some instinct leapt up in my throat, some primitive need suddenly awoke and was satisfied.

april 8

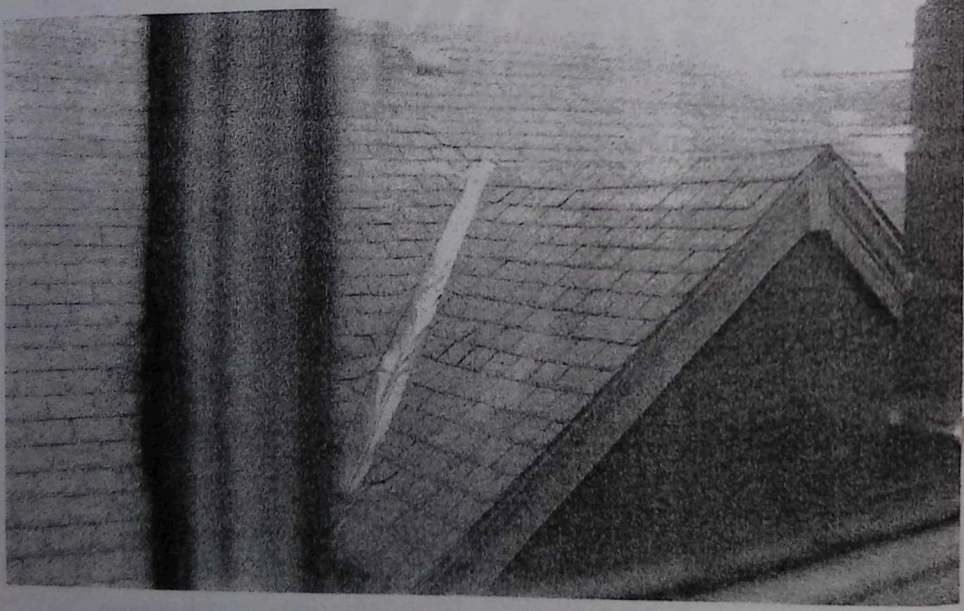
you said today that sometimes you want to die. you asked me why my brother tried to kill himself. you said you hate life, that everything is shit in richmond except for me. i'm glad you said "except for me," but...

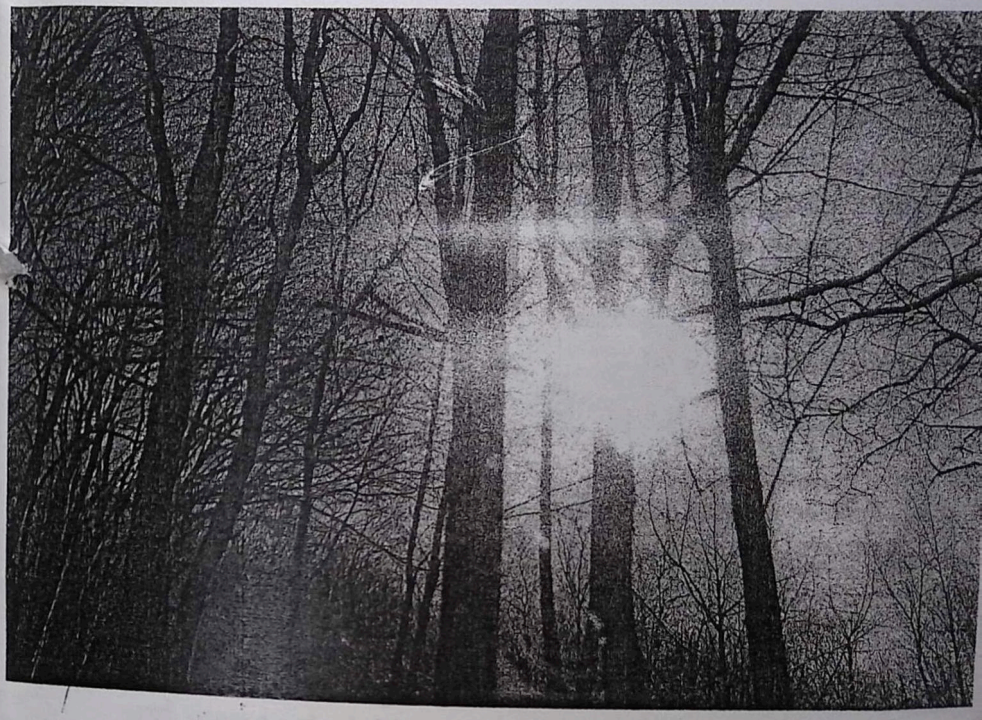


april 9

there's the girl that works at world cup that justin once checked out. now every time i order coffee, i look at her and think these things: *i bet she doesn't have cellulite. look, she's tall, like kendrick. i'm short. she has cute short hair. i bet she doesn't have crooked teeth. i could wear shorts like hers, tight red corduroy. she is probably more interesting than me."* holy shit, this is the way i think—seriously, it's sick and i feel guilty about it, which is the worst combination ever—guilty and jealous. it gives me this mounting, sickening despair in the very center of my chest and it's ruining my life.

yesterday, i held your head to my chest as you cried. we sat on the railway tracks. a train, moving slowly, heavy with coal, came rumbling up. you ran out and put my key on the tracks and ran back. it made a pretty tinkling sound as the wheel ran over it. after the train passed, we found the key, smashed, elongated, flattened. there is something metaphorical in that, but today, i am not feeling very metaphorical.





april 10

my sweet love, we never use terms of endearment but i want to because this is romantic and i won't feel foolish for loving you. we are moving, together, to a house on top of a hill in Richmond, into maybe some brownstone house or a wooden row house, round the street from a coffeeshop and a breathtaking view of where the river bends and of the city side of the city, the tangled dirty heat of smokestacks, high rises, factories, warehouses, cobblestones, dirty puddle water, where one hundred years ago, horses went back and forth like cars. this is where we'll live together with our three cats and this love we bear between us like a (don't feel embarrassed, just say it), like a new baby. you expect fragility but the weight is surprising, the skin soft yet unyielding. you are my promised husband, this is real, this is romantic, why am i so embarrassed to be romantic? i always try to write like a man because i've been taught that because men are stronger in body, they must be stronger in mind—but that doesn't follow.

april 11

i haven't thought this hard about anything in a long time. i can't see the forest for the trees, for the twigs and the leaves crunching underfoot and the sunlight through the tops of the trees blinding me. you said let's sleep on it. you said let's dwell on it. then you said, no, let's get drunk. let's forget about it. and i said, okay. okay. okay. i'm okay. where am i going to be living in two months? **senior of the year.** you have so much potential! **undergraduate writing award.** you are on your way to great things! **top 1% of the senior class**. you're really going to go get 'em! **college of humanities and sciences dean's scholar.** we are so very proud of you.

((but you didn't major in engineering.
you chose english.))

be careful, my father says to me.
you've come so far, he says, *don't you fuck up now.*

so tonight i am going to get drunk.

april 20

i feel shitty but i don't think i did anything wrong. i wasn't very decisive and so we spent a long time wandering around. it was like a nightmare. do you want to go to gutenberg? we never got there. do you want to go to target and get a ouija board? we went and they had no ouija boards. we got popcorn but i didn't want to watch a movie. he was too tired to go on a walk and he said we could go sit on the canal but then he just wanted to go home.

and then i asked this stupid fucking question: "what is your goal in your career? to be rich?" and he said, to... a) find a job he doesn't hate. and b) yes he'd like to be middle upper class. he'd like to be making 80000 by the time we have kids. he wants to give his kids what his parents gave to him, expensive vacations, etc. (80,000 seems like such a ridiculous sum of money to be making in your thirties. why do you need that much money?) i said, "i don't want to be poor, but i don't particularly want to be rich. there are tons of people chasing after money, wanting to be rich, who are really unhappy."

i talk about being there for him but then when it matters, when it's covert, when he's not like, "hey, cat, i need you" (which he is *never* like)—then i can't even sense it. it goes right below my nose and i start a philosophical debate about the issue of american materialist culture! oh my god.

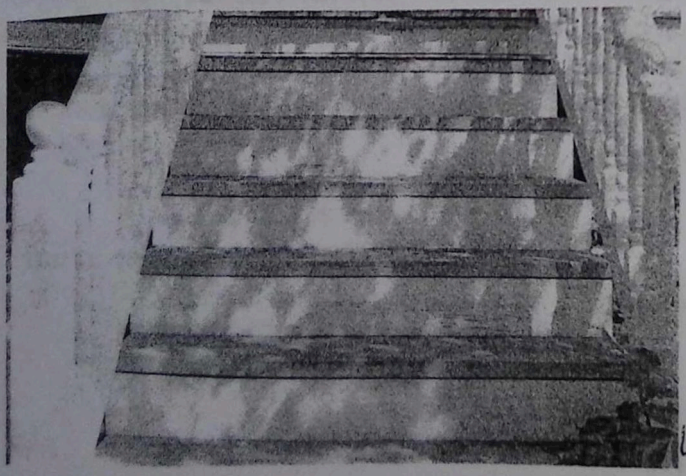
april 29

I have some sort of sick martyr complex. But I'm okay with it. I want to help other people and get a little roughed up while I'm doing it. I don't want to go straight into more writing classes. Without experiences of my own, what I will have to do to be a good writer is a) Lots of research on other people's lives and b) Develop a good voice so I can pretend to be those other people. But really, what that amounts to is stealing other people's tough luck stories and appropriating their voice. Why am I qualified to speak for them?

I need to move. I need a new city. I need to get out of my comfort zone. I need to feel ineffective, useless, insignificant, overwhelmed and confused. Then in overcoming those emotions, I can feel strong.

Yes, this is probably some sort of psychological disorder. Yes, I might regret turning VCU down. But I need to make my own mistakes.

God help me, I don't want to masturbate in literary journals from an academic ivory tower. I don't want to eat hor'douerves while brownnosing some old dude for tenure. Fuck that lifestyle. And my dad says, "The only thing that matters is that you be a Dr. Ennis. You've done so well this far. Now don't fuck it up. You are walking on a razor's edge." Well, Dad, I need to walk off the edge to see what happens.



And Justin says, "You were made for academics. You'd rather get carpal's tunnel from typing than get your hands dirty doing any real work." And that really hurts me that he thinks I'm like that. I want to prove him wrong. Which, I know, is a bad reason to say no to the MFA right now. But I don't care. I want right now to be illogical, irresponsible, irrational and spontaneous. I just need to act like I'm twenty two while I am still twenty two.

For the last four years, I've been so good. *So Good.*

I don't want a PhD in Giving Fancy Names to Things That are Intuitive, which is what a PhD in Composition and Rhetoric is. I don't want a PhD in Creative Writing. Writing is like running. We all already know how to do it. There's only so much you can teach. You just have to do it to get better.

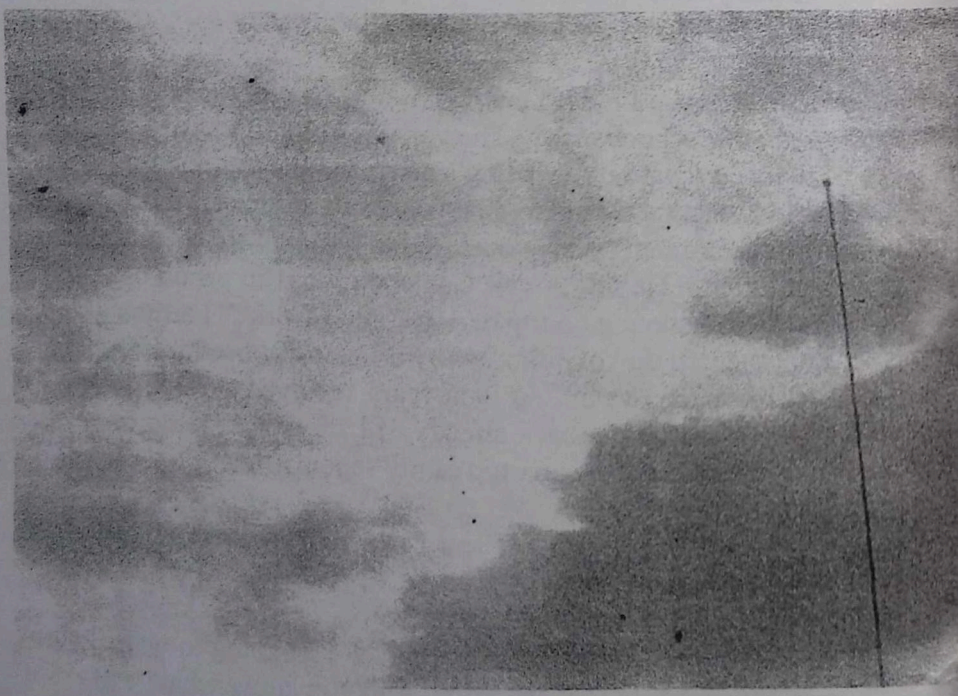
And every time I talk to my dad, it's "And are you staying on top of your schoolwork?" The very night that I got my senior of the year award, the writing award, and the top one % award, I called to say it was okay that he wasn't at the ceremony, but it didn't even seem to have occurred to him that I'd be upset he wasn't there. He said, "Yes, Cat, good job, I'm proud of you, but are you staying on top of your schoolwork?" I almost cried. What the hell do you think? Why do you still need to ask? I have never, *never*, in four long years, received a grade below an A. So get off my back already. If I know how to do one thing, it's how to stay on top of my schoolwork.

And so now, I am going to learn how to do something else. I'm going to get a teaching certificate. Or just work in a restaurant. Or maybe I'll substitute teach in schools. Or, you know, whatever. It doesn't matter that much. I'm going to walk straight off of that razor's edge. And you know what? I'm going to be okay.

may 1

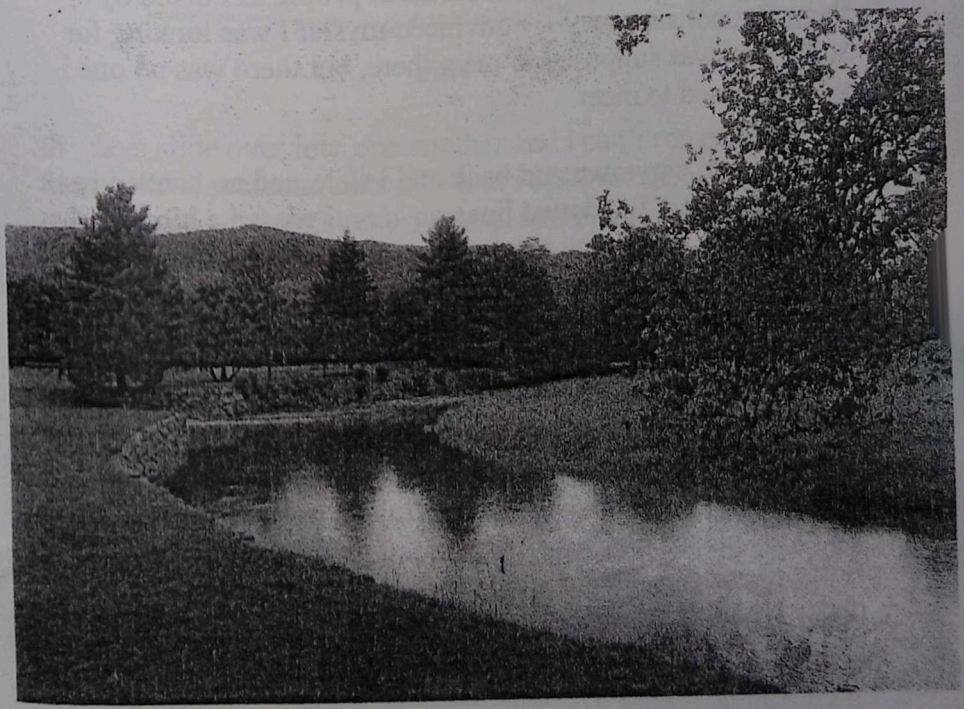
I, Cat Ennis, do hereby solemnly swear to never do a degree in literary criticism. Chaucerian Studies, blah blah blah, people are dying and I'm not going to waste my life doing that bullshit!

I feel like I have some sort of calling. Or something. To do something bigger. Something bigger than debating the inclusion of the Apostrophy S in "women's Studies."



may 2

i dreamed last night that i never went to sleep. there was a dull and nagging panic in the dream—"You need to sleep to function, cat, sleep!" but i couldn't. i woke up at eleven twenty, so glad i had slept.
when he came to bed last night, his hair was wet, his skin was soft and smelled like soap. i don't remember waking up, i don't remember what time it was. all i have is that sense memory of his soft and clean slightly cool skin.
and today, this rain makes everyone seem clean.



may 3

i have been sleeping too much lately. i won't wake up until 11:00 then i'll stay in bed reading, eating cereal, drinking tea, until noon. i'm thinking i need to get a job. schoolwork isn't enough to keep me busy anymore because i'm not doing it.

last night i was so lonely. i'm not exactly sure why. it was eleven oclock, justin was asleep in front of the tv, the eerie flashings of the screen playing across his face. heather was on the couch beside him, watching t.v. and on her laptop at the same time.

i wanted to go on a bike ride with someone but i didn't know who. all i knew was that when i went to take out the trash, the air was so refreshingly cool, the puddles were in the street, the darkness of the city was inviting. i went out by myself.

i biked down to campus and looked at people as i biked by them. i'm not sure why--i convinced myself i was looking for someone i was supposed to meet there, but there was no one i was supposed to meet.

i biked up to carytown and back and i slalomed no handed back and forth across the dotted lines on cary. i passed a hippy girl with a guitar who i saw at harrison street the other day. she looked at me--then there were the bars and the music and light and voices that spilled out of them onto the sidewalk. a girl was singing karoake on the corner of auburn and cary by herself with a microphone. it was very strange, but i was biking very fast and only really saw her for a second.

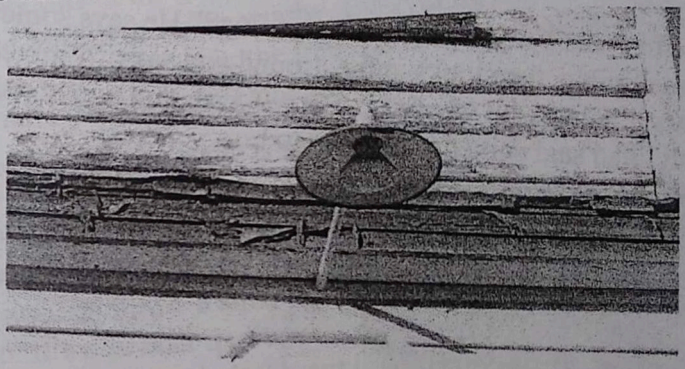
i went back to vine street but i didn't want to go inside. these bike kids passed me--seven or eight of them, all together, riding their bikes, announcing to each other when the road was clear. i wanted to make friends with them. but i was too shy, so i just sat down on the sidewalk in front of my apartment feeling sorry for myself for no discernible reason.

finally i got up and went inside. i took a shower and read beloved until i fell asleep. i had to convince justin to get up off the couch and come sleep in our bed.

may 5

OKAY now that I am sufficiently jealous of Kendrick after looking at all of her pictures (she's such a talented photographer, she's funnier than me and more fun in general, more pretty, all of that crap) AND guilty about wasting time looking at Kendrick's pictures, I can go into the bathroom and sit down on the toilet and feel sorry for myself.

Jesus Christ I am ridiculous!



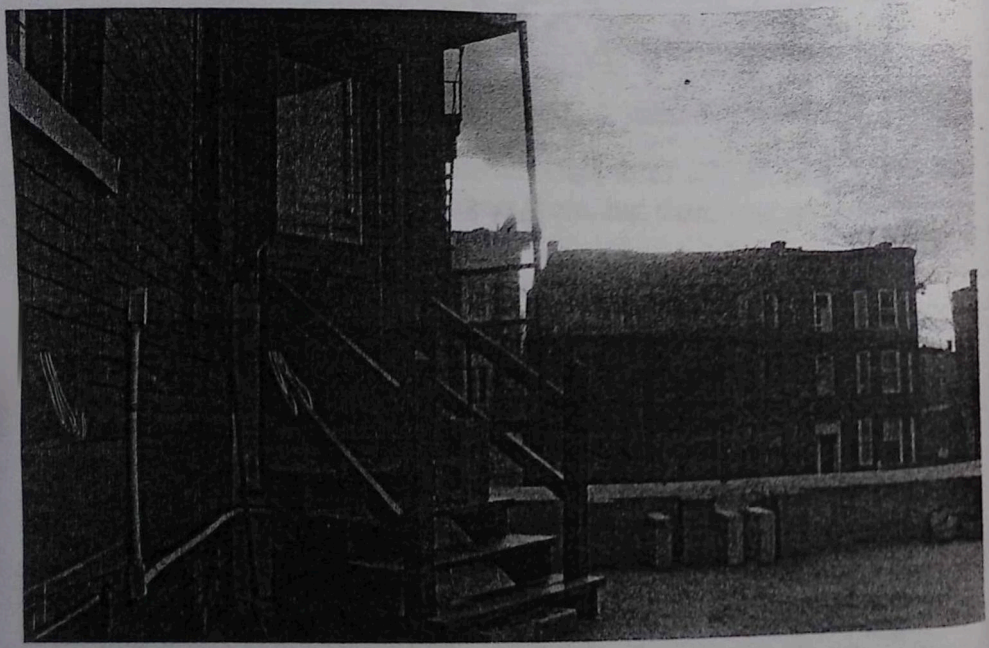
may 8

the days slide over into one another and i can't remember what to say when someone asks me what i did over the weekend. each day is numbered but nameless, and before i go to sleep, i string the completed busy but blank day onto the end of an unbelievably long chain of other nameless days.

sex with the light off and the window open. coming, screaming, oh my god, justin, that feels so good. beer battered tofu sandwich and conversation about god only knows what but i remember laughing. rock climbing. the orange handholds of the climbing wall, rough and callous-forming, but large and inviting. crying in the sculpture garden at eleven p.m. by myself, but i'm not exactly sure why. some strange sense of alienation or isolation that i probably made up. reading *patchwork girl, on subbing,* and *beloved.* working on my vietnam essay. drinking tea and eating jerk seitan. laying down in the shower and justin asking me, "are you all right?" and *really* meaning it.

may 9

I see him and I say, "How are you doing?" He says something unintelligible, then looks at the ground and says, "I mixed up how's it going with what's up. Sorry." Hah that was so cute. I wish I had said something clever to him.



may 12

A friend of our family's two and a half year old son died in early May from an accident. Rest in peace, little boy.

"His head is here," he says, patting the front of the coffin. "We want him buried with his head facing the house."

"I love you little boy." He's sobbing, hands clenched, kneeling in the dirt in the grave, forehead on the tiny coffin. There's a loud bird in the trees nearby. Everything is so still and quiet except for the bird in the tree and the people all standing around the grave, stifling sobs.

"It's not fair. It's not fair. It's not fair. It's not fair."

He climbs up out of the grave. "What I'm going to do is, I'm going to get a shovel. He's my boy. I'll do this for him. And each of us can throw a shovelful in—the community can bury my son. It's a Jewish tradition. I'm not Jewish. But it's a cool thing to do. He's my boy. I want to do this for him."

He walks like a man dazed to the tall mound of reddish clay dirt next to the eight foot grave—"deeper than I'm used to," says the hearse driver--dug just earlier that day. He pushes the shovel in with his foot into the mound, carries it over to his son's grave, throws it in. It makes such a hollow thudding sound on the wood.

He turns away, his face collapses, he's sobbing, he's sobbing—his wife is next, others have shovels too, they take their turns.

"This is real. Because you can't make this up," the grandfather says—it's so unnatural, so unexpected, so sudden and final—who expects to bury your grandson before you yourself are buried?

And then the backhoe's motor stutters and starts. His father is driving it—burying your two year old son with a backhoe—holy Jesus. It seems so brutal, so raw, such a stark reminder of our mortality.

life isn't fair.

the universe is indifferent.

My mom says after it's all over, after the little boy is buried, after he's left out beneath the earth in the rain, "When they decided to bury their little boy on their property, they made the decision, conscious or not, that they would never move. They will both live in that house until they die. They won't be able to leave. They won't be able to leave their son."

may 14

tonight, i'm going to the river with justin and his friends and i'm really looking forward to the cool water that reflects the streetlight and the moonlight that feels gorgeous when you jump into it, the ripples radiating out in front and you know behind you too, although you can't see those ones, treading water in the dark with a man that i love.

every time i say that i'm looking forward to something, i immediately get a little twinge of fear because, because, because, what if it doesn't happen that way? and i'm afraid of being embarrassed, caught disappointed. that's stupid. i have to tell myself, "what is life without hope?" because without hope, really, it's just a succession of numbered days.

Zines I like!

Clutch 16: This zine is the every day life of Clutch, told in comic panels. I found it really compelling, even though it was just about every day life—perhaps because it was about everyday life. The dry humor is great too: "I sure do own a lot of crap. 'How did this happen?'" I'm really not doing this justice. You should read it!
Tugboat Press, www.tugboatpress.com

Introvert 5: Nicole's raw honesty was really compelling for me. I got this at the zine fest and got to meet her, which was awesome!
available through Sweet Candy distro, www.eyecandyzine.com

On Subbing: The First Four Years: Dave is a substitute Education Assistant in special education classes. He chronicles his experiences from day one all the way through year four. I loved this zine because by focusing on the microscopic, Dave says a lot about the macroscopic—the condition of funding in public schools, power struggles in the classroom...I think my favorite part was when he enlists the help of his friends and steals all of the items that one school has on its wish list. "Maybe what I did was wrong , but seeing the PE teacher walk down the hall with jump ropes I stole 12 hours ago feels way better than voting on some ballot measure" (33).
Microcosm Publishing, www.microcosmpublishing.com

Aubade #2

Katie's writing is always refreshingly clean—I don't know how else to say it, but after I read her writing, I feel like I just drank a big glass of water when I was really thirsty. She writes about the "year of mistakes, of missteps." And about hope, "the hint of blue in a grey sky." She writes about roadtrips,

relationships, graduation, her euro-adventure...and I'm not doing this justice either.
"there is something about summer nights in midlothian that swallows me whole...it's summer noisy with crickets and frogs and insects. and it's humid. a kind of humid that holds you close making the days unbearable but the nights thicker...the moon is huge and white and proud. it gets pitch dark here, but i know where i am...these days are lonely, but the nights fill me up until i feel i might burst."
available through Parcell Press, www.parcellpress.com

thanks for reading!

cat ennis

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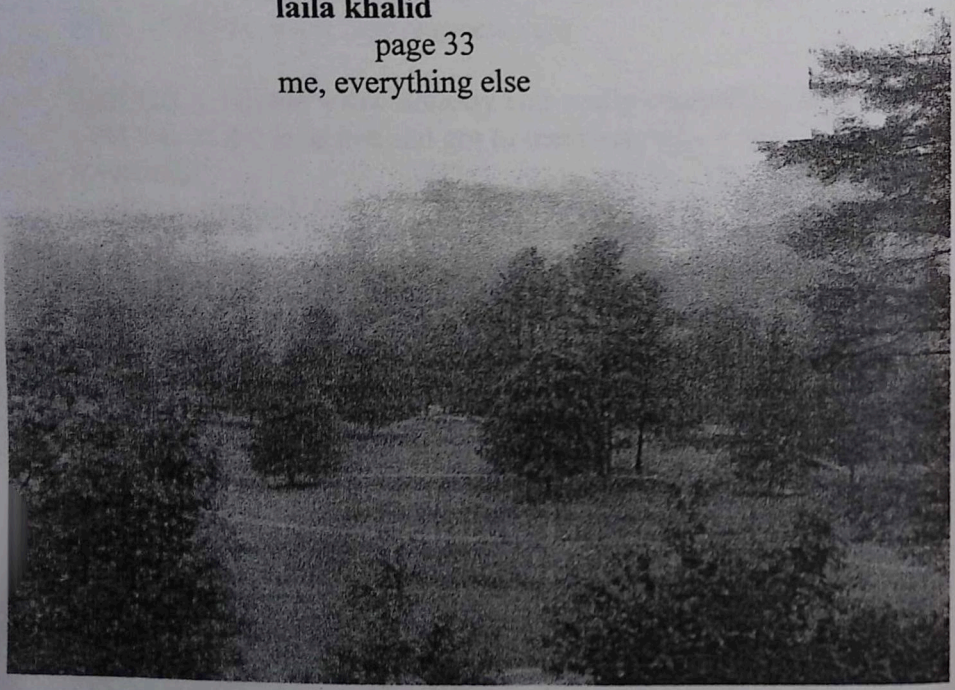
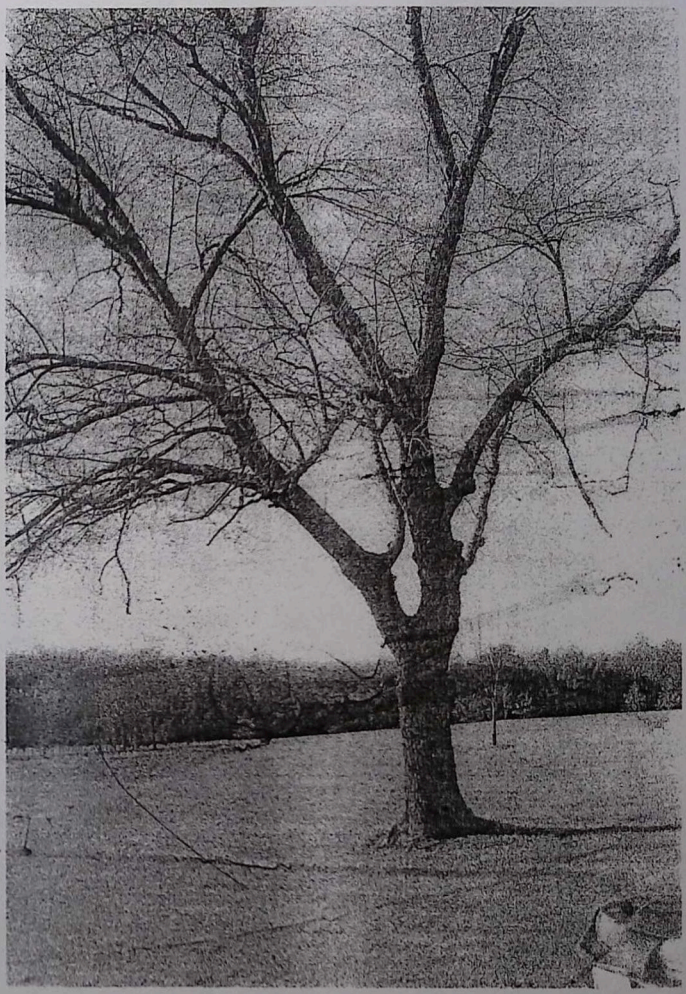
loor volkes (peacegirrl, deviantart.com)
pages 9,10, 28,

dong hyok-so
pages 2, 18, 26, 27, 40, 47, 55

laila khalid
page 33
me, everything else





I like trees

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